Half of the Equation: Social Interest and Self-efficacy Levels Among High School Volunteer Peer Mentors vs. Their Nonmentor Peers

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Abstract

School-based mentoring programs which utilize peer mentors have become a popular and cost-effective way of providing support services to students. While several studies examining mentee outcomes appeared in the past decade, less research has examined characteristics of the high school mentors involved. This study examined social interest, social self-efficacy, and general self-efficacy levels of high school volunteer mentors and their nonmentor peers, along with the effects of gender, prior mentoring experience, and experience as a mentee. Findings suggest higher levels of social self-efficacy, higher numbers of female volunteers, and higher rates of former mentees among mentor populations.

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Peer mentoring has become an established method of reaching students in schools today. The National Mentoring Partnership has estimated that in 2005, over 3 million young people were participating in structured mentoring activities (MENTOR/The National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). Big Brothers Big Sisters of America sponsors the largest number of structured mentoring programs in the US (Herrera, 2004), and the reported successes of its community-based model have largely fueled the development of current school-based models (Herrera, 1999, 2004; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken, & Jucovy, 2007). Approximately 45% of all mentoring programs are site-based, with 70% of site-based programs being school-based (Karcher, Kuperminc, ,Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006). By staging programs within the schools, factors such as transportation and parental involvement have less chance of evolving into barriers. As a result, higher risk students (those with less parental involvement and fewer resources) are more easily engaged in school-based mentoring (Herrera, 1999, 2004; McCluskey, Noller, Lamourex, & McCluskey, 2004).

Accompanying the growth of school-based peer mentor programs has been a concern for evaluative standards of program outcomes. While the literature on school-based mentoring indicates a trend toward success and positive outcomes, many of the reported outcomes are in the form of testimonials or qualitative descriptions (Dubois, 2002). Less information exists regarding measurable, quantifiable outcomes of participation in structured mentoring programs, and even less information exists regarding the operative variables and ingredients for success in peer-mentoring

programs, where older students are trained to mentor younger students (Karcher, 2005). While mentoring studies often focused on outcomes for mentees (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Herrera et al., 2007; Karcher, 2005; King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan, 2002), it is less common to examine the factors associated with the other half of the equation: the mentors in school-based programs (Karcher & Lindwall, 2003). This study was designed to measure mentor characteristics, which may serve as bases for mentor selection. Specifically, the constructs of self-efficacy and social interest among mentors, and the possible relationship between the two factors within mentors, were examined.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's ability to create certain outcomes. Positive mentoring experiences can become corrective experiences for mentees who have low efficacy expectations. Efficacy beliefs with regard to social and coping skills can be bolstered through execution of successful interactions with mentors. By practicing positive behaviors which have been modeled, and receiving positive feedback regarding their efforts, mentees can have self-efficacy levels raised.

Participation in mentoring programs can cause mentors to have stronger efficacy beliefs regarding their own ability to make a difference in someone else's life by observing the success of their mentees. Mentors who expect to meet with success in their role are more likely to present themselves as competent to their respective mentees; this expectancy can lead to increased levels of positive interactions and better program outcomes. Self-efficacy in mentors has been positively correlated with positive experiences within mentoring relationships, and with greater amounts of mentor/mentee contact (Parra, DuBois, Neville, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002).

Social Interest

Social interest is said to represent a reflection of one's identification with humanity and feeling of belonging to community (Karcher & Lindwall, 2003). A central component in Adler's Individual Psychology, social interest is an innate characteristic, yet is also one that requires fostering during developmental years (Adler, 1964). By having caring, altruistic, and cooperative behavior modeled for them, young children can create a bond with their fellow humans and be able to work for the good of the community and not be absorbed by personal conquests alone (Adler).

Mentoring can be seen as an activity which benefits society as a whole, by instilling knowledge and values in the future adult members who will someday hold decision-making power. Social interest is viewed as having a connection to society, and a desire to participate in solving problems of society (Adler, 1964). Altruism has been linked to social interest, and it is a common assumption that students higher in social interest will be more likely to volunteer to participate in altruistic activities, such as mentoring younger students (Karcher & Lindwall, 2003). This assumption stems from Adler's assertion that individuals high in social interest recognize the stress that the demands of life can place on another individual, and will be more inclined to support others in their efforts to overcome those demands. By allowing an outlet for social interest to be expressed and modeled by mentors, mentoring programs can serve as an effective method for improving school climate.

Purpose of the Study

Personal characteristics of mentors are an aspect of mentoring that has been studied less extensively within the overall body of literature on mentoring (Karcher &

Lindwall, 2003). This study addressed this gap by examining the self-efficacy beliefs and social interest levels of high school mentors and provides a comparison between mentor self-efficacy and social interest levels with their nonmentor peers. In addition, this study sought to examine the effects of prior mentoring experience, as either a mentor or mentee, on self-efficacy and social interest among mentor volunteers. Specifically, the research questions related to this study were as follows: Are social interest levels higher in those students who volunteer as mentors than in those who do not? Are self-efficacy levels higher in those students who volunteer as mentors than in those who do not? Is there a relationship between social interest and self-efficacy levels within mentor volunteers (i.e., does having more social interest mean students also have higher levels of self-efficacy)? Are students who were mentored in the past more likely to become mentors in high school than their non-mentored peers? Are those mentors who are returning to the program for a second or third year of mentoring highest in self-efficacy and social interest, compared to first-year mentors? And finally, are female students more likely to volunteer as mentors than male students?

Method

Sample

Students from one suburban New York high school participated in this study (*N* = 69). The number of residents living in the larger community within the school district at the time this study was conducted was approximately 12,000. In 2005, median household annual income was reported at $95,000.00. The area in which the district is located is primarily a residential community. There were 3,200 students enrolled in the district; the district has a 96% graduation rate. Sixty-eight percent of graduates go on to

attend 4-year colleges, while 30% enter 2-year programs. The drop-out rate is reported at .4% (New York State Education Department, 2006). In 2006, the district reported a student body which was 95% White, 2% Hispanic, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% Black/Non-Hispanic (Long Island Schools.com, 2008).

Membership in the volunteer mentor and nonmentor groups was determined by self-selection. Both mentors and nonmentors were given identical packets containing two surveys, a demographic form providing information on gender, age, grade level, current and former mentor participation (if any), and former mentee participation (if any), a parental consent form, and a student assent form. Only those packets which were fully completed, and were returned with both a signed consent and assent form, were analyzed. One hundred twenty-three packets were distributed to mentors; 41 were returned, and of those, 37 were considered viable for use. Within the mentor group, 33 of the 37 participants were female. One hundred forty packets were distributed to non-mentors during study hall periods; 47 were returned, and of those, 32 were considered viable for use. Nineteen of the nonmentor participants were female, 13 were male. Overall, the number of potential nonmentor participants was evenly split between males and females, with survey packets being distributed at random during study hall periods.

All volunteer mentors had their packets distributed and returned prior to the start of any formal training required for participation in the program. All of the nonmentor participants reported having no experiences that would be considered parallel or similar to any formalized mentor training or participation in a mentor program.

Data Collection

Each participant completed the Social Interest Scale (SIS) (Crandall, 1975) and the Self-efficacy Scale (SES) (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, & Rogers, 1982). The SIS consists of 24 items, with 15 specific keyed items that relate to social interest and 9 additional buffer items. The SIS uses a forced-choice format and an ordinal scale; the higher the score on the scale, the higher the level of social interest. The SIS was developed in response to Adler's (1964) emphasis on the importance of social interest to overall well-being among individuals. It uses a value-oriented approach, asking participants to choose between two different values by indicating the one that is more important to them (*i.e*., imaginative – rational). Participants receive a point for each choice that corresponds to the "social" choice, as designated by Crandall.

The SIS was originally normed using four different subject samples, with a total of 213 participants. The mean score of all subjects in Crandall's initial use of the SIS was 8.43, with a standard deviation of 3.57. Females tended to score higher on average than males (8.91 vs. 8.00) (Crandall, 1975). Split-half reliability for the first three of the four subject groups was reported to be .77. Test-retest reliability over a five-week period with the fourth group was .82 (Crandall). Validity for the SIS was investigated by utilizing comparisons to other established measures, such as Rokeach's (1973) Value Survey, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), the Purpose in Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964), the Multiple Affective Adjective Checklist (Zuckerman & Lubin, 1965), and the Philosophy of Human Nature Test (Wrightsman, 1964). Preliminary findings of these comparisons indicated reasonable reliability and validity characteristics of the SIS (Crandall).

The SES is a two-factor scale, designed to measure an individual's generalized and social self-efficacy expectations. Based on the belief that past successes and mastery experiences are thought to contribute to efficacy expectancies which generalize to other actions, the SES is intended to measure self-efficacy that is not tied to any specific situation or behavior (Sherer et al., 1982). The SES is a 23-item self-report scale, with 17 of the items composing the General Self-Efficacy (GSE) subscale and six items representing the Social Self-Efficacy (SSE) subscale. Later revision of the SES included the use of seven filler items (Sherer & Adams, 1983). The two subscales are not combined to produce one overall score; instead, each is seen as a separate measure (Sherer et al.). Chronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were obtained at .86 for the GSE subscale and .71 for the SSE subscale (Sherer et al). To assess construct validity, the authors utilized several other measures of personality characteristics for comparison. These included the Internal-External Control Scale (Rotter, 1966), the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), the Ego Strength Scale (Barron, 1953), the Interpersonal Competency Scale (Holland & Baird, 1968), and the Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Predicted correlations between the SSE and GSE subscales were obtained; findings indicated the SES was both a valid and reliable measure.

The SES is an interval measure, and participants are asked to select their responses using a five point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (worth one point) to *strongly agree* (worth five points). The scorer has the ability to differentiate between the items relating to general self efficacy and those relating to social self efficacy. Some items are identified to the scorer as being "reversed"; for example, the

strongly disagree response is worth one point, but in a reversed item, it would warrant a score of five instead. The higher the overall score on each subscale, the higher the levels of social and general self efficacy.

Data Analysis

Raw scores on the SIS and the SES subscales were collected. A series of independent sample *t* tests was performed first, in order to identify any significant differences in social interest and self-efficacy levels among mentor volunteers and their nonmentor peers. In addition, the relationship between social interest and self-efficacy within each mentor participant was examined, using a Pearson correlation procedure. Additional independent samples *t* test analyses were performed to determine the effects of prior experience as a mentor and a mentee. The effects of gender on test scores for both groups were examined through the use of an independent sample *t* test.

Results

Seventeen (46%) of the mentors who completed the packets successfully were returning mentors who had prior mentoring experience in the same program; 20 (54%) of those who completed the packets successfully were new mentors. Thirty (81%) of the mentors who responded had never been formally mentored while in elementary school, while 7 mentor participants (19%) had participated as mentees while in elementary school. Thirty-three out of 37 mentor participants (89%) were female. This imbalance is representative of the overall mentor population of 123 students from which the mentor sample was drawn, with 98 being female and 25 being male. Ten (27%) of the mentor participants were in 10^{th} grade, 17 (46%) were in 11^{th} grade, and 10 (27%) were in 12^{th} grade. There were no 9^{th} grade mentor participant surveys returned.

Thirty-one (97%) of nonmentor participants had never been formally mentored while in elementary school; 1 person (3%) had participated as a mentee while in elementary school. Nineteen of the 32 (59%) nonmentor respondents were female. Six (19%) of the nonmentor participants were in 10th grade, 5 (16%) were in 11th grade, and 21 (65%) were in 12th grade. There were no 9th grade nonmentor surveys. The mean SSE, GSE, and SIS scores for all participants are listed in Table 1. Mentors scored higher than nonmentors across all measures.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Males, Females, Mentors and Nonmentors.

		N	Mean	SD	Standard Error of Mean
SIS Score	Males	18	7.67	3.29	.775
	Females	51	9.73	2.47	.347
	Mentor	37	9.89	2.37	.389
	Nonmentor	32	8.38	3.14	.555
SSE Score	Males	18	21.12	4.27	1.01
	Females	51	21.41	3.99	.559
	Mentor	37	22.62	3.86	.635
	Nonmentor	32	19.87	3.77	.667
GSE Score	Males	18	60.44	9.31	2.19
	Females	51	63.37	8.26	1.16
	Mentor	37	63.92	8.69	1.42
	Nonmentor	32	61.03	8.31	1.47

Social Interest Among Mentors and Nonmentors

No significant difference was found between mentors and nonmentors on the SIS, t (67) = 2.284, p = 013 (one-tailed) when a directional comparison was made. This finding suggests that both mentors and nonmentors had similar levels of social interest. Although mentors did score slightly higher, the difference between the two groups did not reach statistical significance.

General and Social Self-efficacy Among Mentors and Nonmentors

Results indicated a statistically significant difference in SSE subscale scores between mentors and nonmentors, t (67) = 2.98, p = .002 (one-tailed), when a directional comparison was made, with mentors obtaining higher scores. In examining the GSE subscale scores, no significant difference was found between mentor and nonmentor scores, t (67) = 1.37, p = .087 (one-tailed). This finding indicated that students who volunteer for mentoring programs may have higher levels of social self-efficacy, but do not necessarily differ from their nonmentor peers with respect to general self-efficacy beliefs.

Social Interest, General Self-efficacy, and Social Self-efficacy Within Mentors

A Pearson correlation between SSE scores for mentors (M = 22.62, SD = 3.86) and SIS scores for mentors (M = 9.89, SD = 2.36), using a one-tailed *s*ignificance level of $p < .05$, was not found to be statistically significant, r (37) = .175, p = .150. A Pearson correlation between GSE scores for mentors (M = 63.91, SD = 1.43), and SIS scores using a one-tailed significance level of $p < .05$, was not found to be statistically significant, r (37) = -.246, p = .071. These findings suggest that there was no significant relationship between social or general self-efficacy beliefs and social interest levels within the mentor students.

Prior Experience as a Mentee

The relationship between being mentored and becoming a mentor was examined using a chi-square analysis, and was found to be statistically significant at an alpha level of $p < .05$, χ^2 (1, N = 69) = 4.18, p = .041. As indicated by Cramer's V, the strength of the relationship was .246. This reflected the fact that a higher number of students who were mentored in elementary school were found within the mentor group than within the nonmentor group. Students who had prior experience as a mentee while in elementary school were significantly more likely to volunteer as mentors in high school. Table 2 shows the observed and expected frequency counts associated with the chi-square analysis.

Table 2

Observed and Expected Frequency Counts of the Number of Previously Mentored Students among the Mentor and Nonmentor Groups.

		Were Mentored	Were Never Mentored
Mentors	Observed Count	7	30
	Expected Count	4.3	32.7
Nonmentors	Observed Count	1	31
	Expected Count	3.7	28.3

Returning vs. New Mentors

A series of independent samples *t* tests were used to compare the mean SIS, GSE, and SSE scores among those mentors who were new to the program with those who were returning for a second or higher year of mentoring. There were no significant differences. Mentors who returned for a second or higher year of mentoring did not

differ significantly in SIS, GSE subscale, or SSE subscale scores than first-year mentors.

Gender Differences

In terms of gender differences, males obtained a mean score of 21.12 on the SSE subscale of the SES, 60.44 on the GSE subscale of the SES, and 7.67 on the SIS. Females obtained a mean score of 21.41 on the SSE subscale, 63.37 on the GSE subscale, and 9.73 on the SIS. An independent samples *t* test indicated that there were significant differences between males and females only with respect to SIS scores, $t(67) = 2.78$, $p = .004$ (one-tailed). There were no significant differences in SSE or GSE subscale scores between male and female participants. These results indicated that females (both mentor and non-mentor) in this study demonstrated higher levels of social interest than male participants.

Discussion

This research study sought to examine the preexisting differences among high school mentor volunteers and their nonmentor peers, with respect to social interest and self-efficacy levels. Social interest and self-efficacy have been identified as being relevant constructs for consideration within the study of mentor characteristics.

Social Interest, Social Self-efficacy, and General Self-efficacy

Results of this analysis showed that of the three constructs being measured (social interest, general self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy) only SSE levels differed significantly between mentors and nonmentors, with mentors scoring significantly higher on the SSE subscale of the SES. This finding indicates that while students may possess

similar levels of general self-efficacy and social interest, those who volunteered as mentors demonstrated higher levels of social self-efficacy.

The mentoring program from which the mentors in this study were drawn uses a recreational approach, and social interactions lie at the heart of each week's activities. Mentors are expected to model general rules of social interaction, including things like turn-taking, how to invite others to join in an activity, how to ask others if one can join in, how to be a good winner, how to handle disappointment, and how to make and keep friends. It is possible that high school students who have relatively higher levels of confidence in their own abilities to navigate such social situations are more likely to put themselves in a position of modeling these kinds of behaviors. Perhaps most students surveyed felt similarly competent in their own general problem-solving abilities, but with regard to social interactions, only those higher in SSE were willing to seek out volunteer activities which were social in nature.

Expected Relationship Between Social Interest and Self-efficacy

This study sought to examine the relationship between social interest and self-efficacy within high school mentors. Specifically, this study expected to find that those mentors who were higher in social interest were also higher in self-efficacy, indicating a positive relationship between the two constructs. Pearson correlations did not, however, confirm this prediction.

Among the existing literature, there is little to support the notion of a relationship between social interest and self-efficacy. Further investigation of the relationship between these two constructs is warranted, as well as exploration of relationships to other seemingly similar characteristics, such as altruism. Perhaps students who

participated in this study and who were high in self-efficacy had other opportunities throughout the school year that do not focus on social interest, such as sports, performing arts, or academic programs. Such activities would allow for an expression of self-efficacy through rewards for positive performances, but focus more on individual achievement than on promoting the larger goals of society. When accomplished, the notion of success through individual effort is reinforced, leading students to seek out additional, similar experiences.

Expected Relationship Between Being Mentored and Becoming a Mentor

This study examined the issue of whether or not students who were mentored in elementary school were more likely to volunteer as mentors when they got to high school. Through the use of a chi-square analysis, the link between being mentored and becoming a mentor was established, with a significantly higher number of former mentees appearing in the mentor sample than in the nonmentor sample. It is possible that mentees will later be naturally drawn to the mentoring program, because of their familiarity with the structure and nature of the program. It is also possible that their own positive experiences with being mentored will act as a catalyst for their willingness to become volunteers, or give back to the program that helped them.

Differences Between New and Returning Mentors

Within the mentor sample, this study sought to examine the differences in social interest and self-efficacy between new and returning mentors. Students in the program under study could potentially spend three years as mentors, beginning in 10th grade and continuing on through 12th grade. This study predicted that those students who were volunteering as mentors for a second or third year of mentoring would be higher in both

social interest and self-efficacy than students who were new mentors. This, it was thought, could be due to the additional training given to returning mentors (each year requires participation in a mandatory training component, regardless of previous experience), or could be due to the fact that only those students who were very high in both constructs would be willing to spend more than one year committed to a mentoring program. An independent samples *t* test was used to compare the social interest and self-efficacy scores of new and returning mentors, and the results indicated that there were no significant differences between new and returning mentors within the mentor sample.

This result could be due to the fact that there is a limited group of students who are willing and able to commit to the mentoring program, which meets once a week from October to May. Once a student makes any necessary adjustments to join the program, they are then perhaps willing to maintain that commitment over time and will return the following year. It may not necessarily become increasingly more difficult to stay in the program for a subsequent year once students familiarize themselves with the time commitment, so it may not be necessary to have exceptionally higher levels of social interest or self-efficacy in order to be a returning mentor.

Gender Differences in Social Interest and Self-efficacy

It became clear during data analysis that there were differences between males and females with respect to test scores, with females scoring higher than males across all three measures (SIS, SSE subscale, and GSE subscale), however an independent samples *t* test analysis found only a statistically significant difference on social interest scores. This finding was supported by Crandall's (1975) original work in formulating the

SIS, which reported higher test scores among females when the measure was first being developed. This finding suggests that mentoring may provide females with an outlet for a desire to support others that may not be as common in males. Those higher in social interest (females) may be more likely to seek out activities which involve supporting others who have been identified as being in need of such support.

Implications for Program Coordinators

School-based peer mentoring has become an attractive alternative for schools seeking more opportunities to build social skills. Finding ways to improve the overall quality of such programs has implications for social change, as the number of students involved in formal mentoring continues to grow at an exponential rate. For individuals seeking to improve the effectiveness of any mentoring program, this study may provide a starting point for launching more extensive investigations of mentor characteristics. Personal characteristics can play a role in the decision to become a mentor; therefore, knowing who their mentors are could provide program coordinators with a tool for creating more positive outcomes for both mentors and mentees. Since coordinators in school-based programs often experience the pressure of time constraints when designing and initiating programs, they may not have the luxury of developing relationships with mentor candidates, and carefully assessing the personal characteristics of candidates which could lead to better choices when choosing mentors and matching them with mentees.

This study found significant differences in social self-efficacy levels between mentors and nonmentors, and provides some initial insight into this particular aspect of mentoring. Personal characteristics which include social interest, general self-efficacy,

and social self-efficacy within mentors have not been extensively studied within the body of literature on mentoring, and are certainly worthy of further examination.

This study had a mentor sample that had a higher number of female volunteer mentors than males (33 out of 37 were females). Also worthy of note is the tendency for school-based programs to have higher numbers of male students referred to programs as mentees, with a much smaller number of male mentor volunteers available (Herrera et al., 2007). If coordinators are seeking to increase the number of male volunteer mentors, they may have at their disposal a pool of potential male volunteers within their former mentee population. While matching for gender alone does not appear to improve mentee outcomes, matching for similarity of interests does (Herrera, 2004; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). It may be worthwhile to reach out to male students in particular during the recruitment phase of any school-based mentoring program. Increasing the number of male volunteers could lead to stronger mentor-mentee pairs, thereby increasing the quality of mentee outcomes.

In addition, this study found that a significantly larger number of students within the mentor sample had been mentored while in elementary school. This piece of information is particularly useful to program coordinators, who can identify former mentees as a potential pool of candidates from which they can recruit mentors. Students who have experienced the program first-hand while in elementary school may find that this strengthens their connection to their mentee, and allows them to identify with mentees more readily.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The most obvious limitation of this investigation was sample size, limiting the ability to generalize the results found to any larger population of mentors. Due to the lack of diversity within the overall population from which they were drawn, the mentor and nonmentor samples were similar to one another in many respects.

What were not investigated in this study were the motivations which led certain students to volunteer as mentors. It is possible that student motivation to be a mentor among participants in this study had less to do with a belief in their ability to help others and a desire to bring about positive change in younger students, and more to do with what their friends and peer groups were doing. Students may volunteer as mentors because their friends are volunteering, because they have Tuesday afternoons free, because they are trying to seek out more volunteer activities to put on their college applications, or because other clubs and activities they are interested in were full or did not fit their schedule.

While the limitations listed above are valid concerns in interpreting the results of this study, they do not detract from the overall value of studying mentor characteristics. An examination of social interest and self-efficacy among mentors and nonmentors from another, more diverse student population could provide further information on the differences between the two groups. The homogeneity within the sample used in this study does not allow for an understanding of these factors among students from more urban, culturally diverse schools. In addition, mentees referred for programs in more urban schools typically face different challenges than the mentees attending the program used in this study. Characteristics of mentors within more urban programs may

take on a new significance, given the issues their mentees face. Perhaps more significant differences in social interest and self-efficacy would be found between mentors and nonmentors given a different sample and setting.

Motivations for volunteering as a high school mentor are worth examination, as the possibility for various motivations exists. Further study of other characteristics or factors involved is certainly worthwhile. The significantly larger percentage of female volunteer mentors in this study seems to mirror the general trend found within various mentor samples; further studies may wish to investigate the reasons behind this apparent discrepancy between males and females.

Finding ways to increase the number of male volunteers is a subject that does not appear to have been addressed within the literature on school-based mentoring. This is especially important, since there tends to be higher numbers of male students who are recommended for participation as mentees. Years later, however, it appears that these males are not volunteering as mentors, despite their larger numbers as mentees. This study found a significantly larger number of former mentees within the mentor sample, but the mentor sample was overwhelmingly female. Perhaps examining the different perceptions of male and female mentees at the conclusion of their formal mentoring experience could shed light on the reasons behind this finding, and on the ways in which the perceptions of males and females change as they age.

Further study of mentor characteristics in general is recommended, as this is a subject that has received comparatively little attention within the body of literature on school-based mentoring. Much remains to be seen in terms of program effectiveness and long-term outcomes for mentees and mentors alike. The benefits of having a skilled

and competent mentor can change a child's life forever; so can the effects of having a negative mentoring experience. Our understanding of the potential impact of this kind of relationship was first outlined in ancient Greek times; Homer's epic tales of the adventures of Odysseus have captured our attention and imagination since their conception. This theme has survived and reappeared throughout the world's literature for centuries, indicating our enduring identification with its importance. Surely something so powerful is deserving of a comprehensive examination designed to increase our understanding of the dynamics involved.

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